AMENDMENT TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 13, line 1, with the following rewritten paragraph:

In a preferred embodiment, a High Quality ("HQ") apparatus is implemented to carry out a detection and monitoring function, as to failures and excessive congestion, for the protection switching arrangement of the invention. That HQ apparatus may be operated independently of the router or switch operating at either end of a given working path and its associated protection path, or it may be incorporated into the router/switch on which it is associated. Modules within the HQ apparatus may include a congestion detector 72a to detect congestion on the working path and a normal operation detector 72b that detects a return to normal operation within the working path. These functions may be combined in a monitor module 72c. These detectors/modules may be incorporated into the HQ apparatus or integrated into the router or switch. Operation of an exemplary HQ apparatus, based on an exchange of header, or overhead, data associated with data blocks being transmitted, is hereafter described. Other arrangements for implementation of the disclosed detection/monitoring function will, however, be apparent to those skilled in the art. All such implementations are intended to be within the scope of the invention disclosed and claimed herein.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 11, with the following rewritten paragraph:

The above block layout is common to all BLOHs for signals utilizing VPNs operate according to the protection switching methodology of the invention. Hitless network operation is disclosed in the U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/249,001, filed February 12, 1999, now U.S. Patent No. 6,426,941, the entire disclosure of which is expressly incorporated herein by reference.